

Amendments To the Claims:

1.-17. (canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) The system as claimed in claim ~~19~~ 17, wherein the license key handler manager is configured to transfer the license key of one type to a license key handler of this same type.

19. (Currently Amended) ~~The system as claimed in claim 17,~~ A system for managing a plurality of license keys for a plurality of software programs which need to be enabled, each software program being enabled by a license key of a specific type, the software programs configured for open-loop or closed-loop control when executed by least one automation component, the system comprising:

' a plurality of license key handlers of different types linked to a respective plurality of software programs which need to be enabled, the plurality of license key handlers for receiving license keys of different types, respectively; wherein the plurality of license key handlers are associated with a license key memory, in which case the license key handler stores the license key in the license key memory; and

a license key handler manager connected by a data link to each license key handler to exchange data with each license key handler, said license key manager thereby providing one interface for a user for license enabling for the plurality of software programs which need to be enabled.

20. (previously presented) The system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the license key handler manager is configured to identify the plurality of license key handlers by type.

21. (previously presented) The system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the license key handler manager is configured to identify a license requirement related to the software program.

22. (Currently Amended) The system as claimed in claim 19 ~~17~~, wherein  
the system is a distributed system having at least first and second automation  
components connected by a data link,  
the license key handler is configured to be executed on the first or second automation  
component,  
the software program is configured to be executed on the first automation  
components, and  
the license key handler manager:  
is configured to be executed on the first or second automation component, and  
has a data connection to the license key handler.

23. (Currently Amended) The system as claimed in claim 19 ~~17~~, wherein the license  
key handler manager and the license key handler form one integrated software program.

24. (Currently Amended) The system as claimed in claim 19 ~~17~~, wherein the system is  
an automation component having runtime software.

25. (Currently Amended) A method for managing a plurality of license keys for a plurality of software programs which need to be enabled, each software program being enabled by a license key of a specific type, enabling the execution of at least one software program which needs to be enabled by a license key of a specific type, the method comprising:

providing at least first and second license key handlers of different types associated with a license key memory for receiving license keys of different types, respectively, for enabling first and second software programs which need to be enabled by a license key of a specific type;

connecting the first and second license handlers to a license key handler manager, said license key manager thereby providing one interface for a user for license enabling for the first and second software programs; and

identifying the type of license key handler of the at least first or second license key handler by the license key handler manager.

26. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

transferring the license key of one type to a license key memory of the identified first or second license key handler of this same type by the license key handler manager; and

retrieving the license key from the license key memory by the license key handler, wherein the execution of the software program is enabled by a check of the license key at the identified first or second license key handler using the software program.

27. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

transferring the license key to a license key server by the license key handler manager; and

transmitting the license key of one type to the identified first or second license key handler of this same type by the license key server, wherein the execution of the software program is enabled by a check of the license key at the identified first or second license key handler using the software program.

28. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 27, wherein the license key is stored in and retrieved from a license key memory of the identified first or second license key handler.

29. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:  
transferring the license key of one type to the license key handler of this same type by the license key handler manager; and  
storing the license key in a license key memory of the identified first or second key handler, wherein the execution of the software program is enabled by a check of the license key at the identified first or second license key handler using the software program.

30. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the software program is executed in an embedded runtime system of an industrial automation or drive system having at least one automation component.

31. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein at least two software programs need to be enabled by at least first and second license keys of different types, further comprising transferring the first license key to the first license key handler, wherein the first license key and the first license key handler are of the same type.

32. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the license key handler manager is executed on a personal computer.

33. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the first or second license key handler has a license key memory, and the license key handler manager transfers the license key to the license key memory.

34. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the first or second license handler has a license key memory, and the license key handler stores the license key in the license key memory or reads the license key from the license key memory.

35. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the first and second license key handlers are configured to handle license keys of different types, and the license key handler manager identifies a type of the identified at least first or the second license key handler.

36. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising adding software modules to the license key handler manager for updating the license key handler manager to communicate with a new type of license key handler.

37. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the license key handler manager is provided with the license key over the Internet.